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## Comparison of attitudes of parents having children in early childhood period related to play

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### Abstract

In this study, the purpose was to examine the opinions of parents having children in early childhood period related to play in terms of education variable. In this study which was planned in scanning model, a relational scanning between dependent and independent variables was carried out. The scope of this study consisted of parents living in Konya Province and having children in early childhood period, and the sample group consisted of randomly selected 171 mothers and 148 fathers, totally 319 parents. The dependent variable of the research included opinions related to play. The independent variables were being a parent, educational status of the parents. The opinions of the parents related to play were determined through the questionnaire form developed by the researchers pursuant to the purpose of the study and 'Parents' play attitude scale' developed by Fogle and Mendez. There were questions which would determine the opinions of parents related to play and families' demographic information. The collected data were examined through the SPSS 11 packet program in computer environment, and t-test and variance analysis techniques were applied for the comparisons between the dispersions. The findings of the research show that; the attitudes of parents having children in early childhood period towards play in the context of being a parent and educational status were found meaningful at the level of 0.05 significance.

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**Keywords:** Early childhood period; parents; play; opinions related to play.

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### 1. Introduction

The years which are named as early childhood years are; one of the most critical periods of life because of their effects on following years in terms of forming and shaping the character, acquiring and developing basic knowledge and habits. Observing the child closely and meeting his or her needs in the most appropriate way is a vital, indispensable approach (Ari, 2003, Oktay, 1995). The studies have shown that family is the most effective and economic system that would provide the child's development and continue this development. (Weiss, Coupe, Lopez, 2006). Family which is an institution that exists before birth and continues its effect from early development years to the end of life shapes the child physiologically and it also formalizes the child economically and socially, and helps the child's individual and social harmony develop. How the features that the child has brought genetically would develop, how they would be formed and how they would affect the following years; depend on many variables

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about family environment such as the benefits that family's socio-economical and cultural qualification provides for the children, family members' relationship with each other and with their children, their child raising manners, verbal communication styles, the models that they represent, the knowledge of them about health, nutrition, development and education (Tezel Şahin, 2003). Body and et al. (2005) emphasize the role of family that it has in the early years of life in forming the social and emotional development of a child; and they add that the relations between the child and his/her parent will be the baseline for their relationship with other adults, especially with peers. There are many things that a child may learn and must learn from his/her parents. Play is the best way to learn these things. Parents may transfer many attitudes, information and skills by playing with their children. They may create a kind of willingness to learn with their children. While playing, it is easy to teach many rules about which parents have problems in teaching normally. Children learn rules and concepts such as putting stuff in order and arranging, sharing, helping and cooperation, respecting others and their work while playing unconsciously (Tezel Şahin, 1993). When parents whose roles for their children's development can not be thought insignificant take active parts in their children's play which is the most important dealing for children, this will help children be in much better situation in terms of every kind of development. In this study the opinions of parents about play were tried to be determined.

In this study, the purpose was to examine the opinions of parents having children in early childhood period about play in the contexts of being a parent, educational status of the parents.

## 2. Method

A relational scanning was used between dependent and independent variables in this research which is in the scanning model. The scope of this study consisted of parents living in Konya Province and having children in early childhood period, and the sample group consisted of randomly selected 171 mothers and 148 fathers, totally 319 parents. The dependent variable of the research included opinions related to play. The independent variables were being a parent, educational status of the parents. The opinions of the parents related to play were determined through the questionnaire form developed by the researchers pursuant to the purpose of the study and 'Parents' play attitude scale' developed by Fogle and Mendez. There were questions which would determine the opinions of parents related to play and families' demographic information.

Parents' play attitude scale' which was used for determining the opinions of parents having children in early childhood period was a 30-item parent questionnaire that was rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (I never agree) to 5 (I completely agree). Principal component analysis yielded two factors, Play Support and Academic Focus. Play Support consisted of 16 items that reflected parents' attitudes pertaining to whether play was an enjoyable and valuable activity with many developmental benefits to children. Academic Focus consisted of 8 items that reflected parents' attitudes pertaining to whether academically oriented activities were more important than play in their children's development. In the consequence of reliability and validity studies that followed the translation into Turkish, the scale's total variance explaining rate in terms of measuring two factors was 37,56 %. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient was .82. The scale's Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient for sub items was .88 for Play Support and .67 for Academic Focus.

SPSS packet program was applied for analyzing the data. In this research in order to explain the generalization of the difference between two averages for more than two groups, "one way variance analysis" was applied, and when the result of one way variance analysis was meaningful, the Tukey test was carried out with the objective of determining the groups and which group or groups caused this difference. T- Test was carried out for the control of difference between the averages in two groups assigned. (Alpar, 2001.). The value level for the analysis of the data was determined as 0.05.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

This section includes research findings and comments on the findings.

53,6 % (n= 171) of the sample group consisted of mothers, % 46,4 (n= 148) sample group covers fathers. The ages of 38,9 % of mothers and fathers ranged from 28 to 32 years; while 25,7 % of the parents were officials, 25,4 % of them were unemployed. While 82, 4 % of mothers said "yes" for the employment condition of spouses, 62,2 % of the fathers said "no" for the same condition. The monthly income for 31,2 % of the families was between 450-

900 NTL, and the family structure was nuclear family with the percentage of 74,6. The gender of children in early childhood period of the mothers taking part in the research was males with the percentage of 53,2, the gender of children of the fathers was male again with the percentage of 51,4. Both mothers' and fathers' playing time was between 15 and 30 minutes with the rate of 52 %. By considering the definition of "Play", 90,6 % of the mothers and 91,2 % of the fathers were assessed that they conceived play as an important factor for the development of a child. 60 % of the mothers and 54,7 % of the fathers gave the answer of "whenever possible" to the question of "when do you play?".

Table 1: The T Test Comparison Of Parents' Attitudes Related to Play According To The Variable Of Being A Parent.

Subcomponents	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	t Value	p Value
Play Support	Father	148	63,46	9,70	-2,095	0,037
	Mother	171	65,63	8,80		
Academic Focus	Father	148	29,16	6,018	-2,709	0,007
	Mother	171	30,95	5,73		

\* P<0.05 significant

In Table 1, there we see the analysis of attitudes of parents who have children in early childhood period towards play according to the variable of "being a parent". In the consequences of independent t tested analyses, when the play support and academic support are examined in terms of sub dimensions: while the average point of the fathers in terms of play support sub dimension is 63,46, the mothers' score is 65, 63. These values represent a difference which has significance on the level of 0.05. In terms of play support which is the sub dimension of attitudes related to play, it has been observed that mothers think that play improves social skills and helps language development, the mothers enjoy playing with their children and they support the children to play with their peer group by playing with their children, the mothers are more positive about the case in which play is thought to be a vehicle by means of what children express their emotions. When the situation is examined from the academic focus sub dimension, while the fathers' score average is calculated as 29,16, the mothers' average is calculated as 30,95. These averages show an advantage for the mothers according to the variable of being a parent. The score averages that the mothers having children in early childhood period got in the academic sub dimension shows that the mothers are more positive about thinking the children will have more important skills by playing, play will improve children's problem solving skills, play will help academic skills such as counting and knowing the letters develop.

Table 2 : Variance analysis of father's opinions about play in the conjunction of Educational Status and Tukey Test Results

Subcomponents	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	Sd	F	p value	Difference
Play Support	Primary school	51	62,56	10,86	145:2 147	0,73	0,48	-
	High school	31	62,64	10,87				
	University	66	64,54	8,09				
Academic Focus	Primary school	51	26,11	5,67	145:2 147	12,55	0,00	P.-H. P.-U. H.-U.
	High School	31	29,61	4,51				
	University	66	31,31	5,97				

\* P<0.05 Significant

The attitudes of fathers who have children in early childhood period are assessed by one way variance analysis in the terms of the education status that the fathers have. According to the statistical analyses; the calculated play support sub dimension F value is 0,73. This value represents a significant difference on the level of 0.05. As it is seen in table 2, the F value that the fathers got from the academic sub dimension in terms of educational status variable is 12.55. This value states a meaningful relation in the context of academic sub dimension when the fathers' educational status is considered. The Tukey test is applied in order to understand for which group this relation is a benefit. When the fathers' educational status is compared with each other in terms of academic sub dimension, it is

observed that high school and university graduated fathers got higher score averages than the fathers graduated from primary schools. There is not a considerable difference between the fathers graduated from high schools and the fathers graduated from universities in terms of academic focus sub dimension. The fathers who graduated from primary schools got the lowest average. This situation shows that while the fathers graduated from primary schools express more negative attitudes towards play, the fathers graduated from high schools and universities show more positive attitudes towards play. The higher the fathers' educational status, the more positive attitudes towards play they exhibit by noticing play helps children's academic skills such as counting and knowing the letters.

It is thought that if parents have high education levels, they get higher score averages on the sub dimension of academic focus in order to help their children progress in their academic lives by understanding the importance of play which is the most serious dealing of a child. Auerbach (2008) describes play as a way helping the child understand the world, behave productively to other children and adults, have a richer concentration ability which is necessary for him/her to have before starting to school, develop his/her natural curiosity, solve problems and improve his/her creativity.

Table 3: Variance analysis of Mothers' opinions about play in the conjunction of Educational Status and Tukey Test Results

Subcomponents	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	Sd	F	p value	Difference
Play Support	Primary school	63	63,76	9,87	168:2 170	2,94	0,05	P.-U.
	High school	37	65,43	7,96				
	University	71	67,40	7,93				
Academic Focus	Primary school	63	27,39	5,89	168:2 170	24,75	0,00	P.-H. P.-U.
	High School	37	32,59	4,74				
	University	71	33,25	4,39				

\*  $P < 0.05$  significant

As to the one way variance analysis scores of mothers' attitudes towards play in the context of education that they have; the F value is calculated was 2,94 in terms of play support sub dimension. This value represents a difference on the level of 0.05 significance. The F value that the mothers got on the academic sub dimension in terms of educational status variance was calculated as 24,75. This outcome represents a meaningful relation on academic sub dimension in terms of mothers' educational status variance. The Tukey test was carried out in order to determine the level of this relationship.

Considering the attitudes of mothers towards play in the context of educational status variance, the highest score average on play support sub dimension was  $\bar{X} = 67,40$  for the mothers graduated from universities. There is not a meaningful difference between the mothers graduated from primary schools and high schools, and the mothers graduated from high schools and universities.

These results imply that the mothers graduated from primary schools are more negative when they are compared to mothers graduated from high schools and universities. Mothers who are university graduates exhibit a more positive attitude from the perspective of "playing helps my child express his/her feelings, playing at school prepares my child for kindergarten, playing with my child helps me set a better relation together" Damats and et al. (1996) studied mother beliefs and behaviours during mother and child playing sessions. The study was conducted on mothers having 21 months old babies and their babies. The mothers and their babies were observed at home during free playing sessions. As a result; it is found that mothers who have more knowledge about play development and who are more conscious about this case supply more interesting and interactive playing conditions. (Akt: Tezel Şahin, 2003).

When the table 3 is examined, it is seen that the mothers who are primary school graduates get lower score averages on academic sub dimension than the mothers who are high school and university graduates. In terms of academic focus sub dimension, there is not a considerable difference at the level of 0, 05 significance. The mothers graduated from primary schools got the lowest score average. In the highlight of this situation, it is determined that the mothers graduated from primary schools show more negative attitudes for play, the mothers who are graduates of high schools and universities, on the other hand, are more positive.

Table 4: Variance analysis of parents' opinions about play in the conjunction of Educational Status and Tukey Test Results

Subcomponents	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	Sd	F	p value	Difference
Play Support	Primary school	114	63,22	10,29				
	High school	68	64,16	9,43	316:2 318	2,98	0,05	P.-U.
	University	137	66,02	8,10				
Academic Focus	Primary school	114	26,82	5,80				
	High school	68	31,23	4,84	316:2 318	34,18	0,00	P.-H. P.-U.
	University	137	32,32	5,28				

\*  $P < 0.05$  significant

The parents' attitudes towards play are examined through the one way variance analysis technique in the context of their educational status, and the calculated F value that the parents got on play support sub dimension is 2,98. This value represents a considerable difference. As it is seen in table 4, the F value that the parents got on the academic sub dimension of educational status is 34, 18. This expresses a meaningful relation on the academic focus sub dimension with the consideration of parents' educational status. The Tukey test is applied in order to understand for which groups this relation is a benefit.

When the average scores that the parents got in terms of educational status on the play support sub dimension are compared, it is observed that the parents who are university graduates got higher scores than parents who are graduates of primary and high schools.

There is not a meaningful difference between the parents graduated from primary schools and high schools, and the parents graduated from high schools and universities.

The considerable difference is between the mothers who are primary school graduates and university graduates. This finding shows that the parents who graduated from universities exhibit attitudes which express the positive effects of play on children. Freud describes play as an activity that helps children reach social maturity and find their own identities. He thinks that play is the mirror of the child's behaviour and character. (Özyeşer Cinel, 2006). As it is seen in Table 4, when the parents are compared in terms of educational status on the academic sub dimension, parents graduated from high schools and universities got higher scores than the parents who are primary school graduates. There is not a meaningful difference between the mothers graduated from high schools and the mothers graduated from universities on the academic focus sub dimension. The parents graduated from universities got the highest score average, the parents who are primary school graduates got the lowest average. This means that the parents who are university graduates show more positive attitudes for play. It is thought that the parents having primary school education perceive play as something keeping the child busy and they do not conceive the importance of play adequately.

#### 4. Conclusion and Suggestions

The findings of the study show that the attitudes of parents having children in early childhood period are meaningful in terms of being a parent and educational status variables. The same meaningfulness has also been determined for both play support and academic focus. The higher educational status parents receive, the higher arithmetical averages they get on attitude scales. The mothers' score averages are higher in both play support and academic focus in comparison to the fathers' score averages.

The collected findings show that there should be more emphasis on play and its benefits within the socially and scientifically supported seminars which are arranged for parents having lower educational levels.

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